

CHAPTER 10.

WRITING STUDIOS AS
COUNTERMONUMENT:
REFLEXIVE MOMENTS FROM
ONLINE WRITING STUDIOS IN
WRITING CENTER PARTNERSHIPS

Michelle Miley

Montana State University

We hear the warning cries all around us: The shift to the new corporate university is leading to the crumbling of the humanities (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Berlin, 1996, 2003; Bérubé & Nelson, 1994; Bousquet & Parascondola, 2004; for example). With its focus on efficiency, production, and profits, the corporate university erodes what many see as the intangible value of a liberal education. Recognizing the need to find our place in this new era of higher ed, some argue that rhetoric and composition, with our resistance to the static consumption of knowledge, provides a necessary counter perspective to the monument of the corporation. But Paul Butler (2006) argues that despite our efforts to subvert the calcified models of education inherent in a corporate model “through innovative teaching practices,” the difficulty of working for generative change within the university creates an “impasse,” and writing programs can quickly become “monolithic or static in their evolution” (p. 11). Butler uses the metaphor of the “countermonument” as a defense against fossilized programs. Drawing from James Young’s analysis of countermonuments as “self-conscious memorial spaces” (p. 11), Butler asserts that finding countermonuments to our programs can help us “examine their fundamental reason for being,” resisting impasse as “[they] assume a more protean and thus more viable shape” (2006, p. 12).

The idea of a countermonument provides a nice metaphor for the structural risks necessary for innovation. Butler notes that countermonuments require a great amount of self-assessment and reflection and, importantly, a willingness to allow viewers to share authority in the construction of identity (p. 15). The necessity of a countermonument’s “willingness to open itself to its own violation” (p. 15) suggests to me the openness of Edward Soja’s (1996) thirdspace where multiple per-

spectives collide, where the clash between our lived experiences and idealizations become visible. Soja notes that exploring these spaces requires a “strategic and flexible way of thinking” (p. 22). Donna Qualley’s (1997) reflexive spaces speak both to Soja’s necessary flexibility for thirdspace exploration and Butler’s reflection and willingness to share authority in construction of identity. Qualley (1997) defines reflexive spaces as those where we see our own ways of knowing reflected back to us through another’s perspective. She notes how often times our understanding of teaching grows from the limited focus of an individual perspective rather than a holistic view (1997, p. 23). I believe that by creating reflexive and reflective spaces, countermonuments reveal thirdspaces and provide new angles of vision necessary for creating innovative environments that resist fossilization. I experience Writing Studios as offering those angles of vision. Through the development of writing studio partnerships at the University of Houston’s Writing Center, I encountered thirdspace and experienced both the reflective and reflexive moments Butler’s and Qualley’s metaphors allow us to envision.

The University of Houston Writing Center’s Writing in the Disciplines (WID) program was birthed out of the university’s desire to provide “writing instruction that meets the diverse needs of a student population at undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels” (“The Writing Center at UH; Mission Statement”). A large, metropolitan commuter campus touted as the second most diverse research institution in the United States, the university provides rich opportunity for educators to teach students writing within their disciplines, both as a means to join their professional discourse communities and as a way to become active creators of knowledge within their professions. Because of the diversity of students and large class sizes, these educators rely on the Writing Center for help providing effective writing instruction. Those of us working within the Center understood our charge, but also understood how easily we could give in to the pressure to become the “saviors” of writing for professors in large lecture classes who are not schooled in teaching writing. As the Assistant Director of Writing in the Disciplines, I felt this pressure. I also knew that our standard approach, one meeting between a tutor and a student, could not provide the rich, rhetorical understanding of writing I wanted students to experience. Looking for an approach that would resist the static consumption of knowledge that can occur in the context of large, lecture-oriented disciplinary classes and would draw on the resources available through the Writing Center, I turned to the Studio method. Although, as the chapters in this volume suggest, the Studio method began in and is often associated with basic and first-year writing, I saw in the Studio model an opportunity to build a countermonument to what I saw as the limited structures in place for supporting Writing in the Disciplines at our institution.

The first studio partnerships were connected to traditional face-to-face courses.

Those enrolled, for example, in the Hospitality Law course were assigned to a studio group of five to seven students. That group, which stayed consistent throughout the semester, would meet every few weeks with a Writing Center tutor to discuss their writing. The tutor would facilitate the discussion and then would give me feedback on the process. As our partnerships expanded to include online and hybrid courses, we encountered the need to move the studios into online spaces. These online studios, which began with a partnership in the College of Technology, led to a large-scale partnership with the composition program and the development of hybrid sections of first-year composition. (Mary Gray discusses the development of the first-year writing program in her chapter in this volume.)

In this chapter, I use Butler's metaphor of the countermonument and its possibilities for creating reflexive spaces to describe my experience with online Writing Studios both in a WID partnership and in the larger first-year composition partnership. The chapter draws from data gathered between fall 2009 and spring 2013 (Miley, 2013), and includes analysis of archived online writing studio conversations from both fall 2009 and spring 2010, email conversations outside of the studio space, and written facilitator reflections. In addition, I interviewed the instructors and the facilitators involved in the project in spring 2013. From these sources, I trace the adaptation of the Studio approach into an online, hybrid setting for a College of Technology class, showing how that class' online studios helped those of us in the partnership rethink both our ways of and motivations for teaching writing. I then discuss the expansion of the online studio approach into a hybrid first-year composition course model, describing how the online studios made visible moments of resistance to innovation influenced by disciplinary discourse and institutional relationships. Through these partnerships, I discovered that the writing studio collaborations provided what Grego and Thompson (2008) describe as "an institutionally aware methodology" (p. 21), serving as a counter not only to the institution but also to disciplinary knowledge. The chapter concludes by suggesting how online Writing Studios can help writing teachers resist disciplinary calcification and work within and against the institution. This discussion also illustrates how studios make visible the moments when, without the willingness to take the structural risks that Butler calls for, we become "monolithic or static" (2006, p. 11) despite our motivation to be innovative.

BUILDING THE COUNTERMONUMENT: ONLINE STUDIOS FOR A WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES COURSE

Writing center history includes a long list of scholars who creatively envision writing center work as much more than the remedial service it was original-

ly imagined to provide. But, as Butler argues, the generative change of countermonuments is not easily accomplished. One difficulty in re-envisioning the possibilities for writing center work lies in the center's place in the institution. Situated as student service centers with tenuous funding, writing centers often agree to ignore tensions between the institutional expectations of writing centers and what is actually possible and theoretically sound because they need a "sense of authority and expertise" in order to survive (Pemberton, 1995, p. 120). Pemberton uses the relationship between WID programs and writing centers to exemplify the often fossilizing tension between expectations and possibilities for writing center work. Historically, WID programs have involved collaboration between those in the disciplines and those in writing center work, but much of it has been in the form of WID instructors sending students to the center for one-on-one tutoring sessions, in a sense "outsourcing" the teaching of writing. This model of collaboration seems to benefit both parties. Those in writing centers gain identity and purpose, and those sending their students to us get the help they need teaching writing. We become complicit in what Pemberton terms "administrative expediency" (1995, p. 117).

In an environment where the management of the university draws more and more on a corporate model that measures success by continual expansion, I know the dangers of falling into a service identity, of the writing center becoming the outsource for someone else's teaching. I must admit, in fact, that the development of online studios in the University of Houston Writing Center began with my own fear that if I did not provide a new service to meet the needs of my WID partners, I would become irrelevant in my institution. Although my initial impulse for implementing Studios was as a means to provide the innovative learning environments that worked against the large lecture classes the institution imposed, I was also working under the pressure of the institution to continually grow the number of students served in the Writing Center. When I began developing studio partnerships, my success was measured not simply by the development of the students I was working with, but also by the number of new partnerships I formed. I knew that if I did not expand the studio partnerships to other courses, I would not continue to receive the funding I needed to survive. In an attempt to expand, I asked Micah, the Assistant Dean of Assessment in the College of Technology, if he knew any faculty members who might want to partner with me.

At about that same time, Morgan, an assistant professor within the College of Technology, had gone to Micah expressing frustration at the "incomprehensible" writing in her senior-level, undergraduate Quality Improvement Methods course. In her course, Morgan asked students to investigate real world problems, to apply the tools and methods they were learning in class to these problems,

and then to summarize their findings in a technical report. Morgan specifically designed her assignments to include a written report that would provide students with an opportunity to practice articulating ideas in written form, a skill “especially important in the decision sciences where effective communication is needed to make well-informed decisions within organizations” (Kovach, Miley, & Ramos, 2012, p. 367). Morgan had become increasingly frustrated by these reports as she began to recognize that “students’ written communication skills made it extremely difficult to identify whether students understood the course material” (Kovach, Miley, & Ramos, 2012, p. 368). When Micah sent out the offer for assistance from the Writing Center, she responded, hoping that “the [W]riting [C]enter would help to copy edit my students work, so it would be better and I wouldn’t have to do it” (personal email conversation, 13 March 2013).

Both Morgan and I were falling into the “administrative expediency” Pemberton warns against. Certainly, Morgan communicated her anxiety about responding to writing with the all-too-familiar excuse that because she did not have time to teach writing, the Writing Center could do it. I accepted this identity, knowing I needed to increase my partnerships. But the countermonument I was building, the face-to-face Writing Studios, were too static for the new environments of teaching at the university. Immediately, the partnership with Morgan provided the reflexive moment necessary to counter my fossilized ways of thinking about where and when writing instruction can and should occur. Within the first semester of working together, our online writing studio collaboration made visible my static ways of thinking about teaching with technology. In fact, the online environment provided a material space for those of us teaching writing to view the learning that we simply trusted was happening in the face-to-face environment. Figuring out how to provide the best learning environment for Morgan’s students, we moved toward a collaboration that was less like what Pemberton describes and more like the “ethical collaborators who developed ‘shared agency’” that Ritola, et.al (this volume) describe.

REFLEXIVE MOMENT: RESISTANCE TO ONLINE EDUCATION

As noted above, students in the original version of Studio met face-to-face in a space designed to facilitate conversation. The space provided what I believed was a counter to the large lecture classes in which they were enrolled and provided a means to foster both conversation and community. In my mind, online education fostered neither conversation nor community, and was simply a means by which the institution could continue to increase course enrollment. However, Morgan’s Quality Improvement Methods course is a hybrid course, like many

courses in the College of Technology. Our first semester, Morgan immediately asked if we could develop the Writing Studios in an online environment. I reacted with an emphatic “no.” I argued that the studios had to be face-to-face; the conversation and relationships essential to the practice depended on it. Because the course is a hybrid and students are typically non-traditional, however, Morgan countered that students would not participate if we did not find a way to put the writing studio space online. She also noted that being technology students, online was a comfortable place for them to be.

I do not completely know why I resisted moving the Studios online. In many ways, the Studio approach and online writing instruction (OWI) grow from the same theoretical family tree. As Gray notes in this volume, Hewett and Ehmann (2004) root OWI “strongly in the social-constructivist epistemology, wherein knowledge is understood to be dynamic, provisional, and developed and mediated socially as people operate within various ‘communities’ of knowledge” (p. 33). Citing theorists like Vygotsky, Kuhn, and Bruffee, Hewett and Ehmann provide a strong argument for the success of online writing instruction. In addition, Scott Warnock (2008) goes so far as to connect OWI to the Studio model, stating that “[t]he continuous writing environment [of OWI] makes it ever possible for students to learn through their own work in a studio-like environment” (p. xii). Remembering that Grego and Thompson (2008) assert that Studios should be “highly adaptable,” formed from “a configuration of relationships that can emerge from different contexts,” I finally agreed to develop online writing studios for Morgan’s class (p. 7).

INNOVATING: CREATING THE ONLINE STUDIO ENVIRONMENT

Our development started with the creation of a “space” in Morgan’s Blackboard shell where we created discussion forums for the studio groups using the group function. We divided the students into groups of five to seven and assigned a Writing Center peer tutor to facilitate each group. We asked students to “post” a draft of their writing along with a paragraph telling the group where they were in the process and what they would like for the group to focus on. The others in the group would have four days to come into the space and respond to their peers’ questions, concerns, ideas, and drafts. The Writing Center tutor would come in and out of the space, responding to writing, facilitating questions, and guiding the conversation.

As it turns out, transitioning studios to an online environment not only “worked,” it had real benefits. Because the conversation is asynchronous, writers could come back into the boards at any time to ask or answer any questions posed. Students communicated through writing throughout the entire process.

Our commuter student population had the added benefit of being able to work in the studios at the time most convenient for them. And, somewhat selfishly from a researcher's standpoint, I had every conversation "captured" for current and future analysis.

In addition, because of our partnership, I was exposed to a new environment for teaching writing. In my conversations with Morgan, I discovered that she, too, found a new way of teaching. She had never thought to use Blackboard's "discussion" tool. Because of our partnership, she now includes discussions not just in her online teaching environment but also in the classroom environment.

Discussion, a staple in the composition classroom, was a new tool for teaching decision sciences. Through the analysis of the online conversations, Morgan, the tutors, and I could better understand both the process students were undergoing as they wrote the assigned technical reports and the ways our interactions with the students shaped their understanding of their writing processes. Because we could see the conversations between the students in the online studio groups, those of us in the teaching role had a new view from the student perspective. Drawing from new insights gained, Morgan revised how she teaches her class, and the peer tutors and I revised how we interact with the students. Like the reflective properties of the countermonument, the online environment provided the time and the space necessary to "see" what the conversations in our learning environment reveal.

REFLEXIVE MOMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTICULATING INNOVATION

It was not simply in the online space that we discovered insights. The conversations surrounding setting up the online writing studio partnerships provided rich reflexive moments as well. In fact, like Dan Fraizer (this volume) argues, we found our dialogue between facilitators, teachers, and administrators to be essential for the success of the studio program. It was in our dialogue that our discovery for the need for a clear orientation occurred. For writing studios to succeed, I had to articulate their purpose and logistics to both professors and students. Writing studios are, indeed, innovative, and new ideas require some explanation. Describing the logistics of creating this space to students and professors becomes even more important when the Studio is moved online. If those participating do not grasp what the studio environment can provide or how the Studio will function, the online space remains empty. We cannot reach through the screen to draw people in.

In the College of Technology, PowerPoints with graphs and charts are a standard medium for communicating. So, when Morgan began putting together the class in which we would introduce studios to the students, she asked me for a

slide set to explain the studio process—a chart, a graph, or some sort of illustration. Working from my own standards in teaching, I responded, “I think I’ll just talk to the students and explain to them the conversation in Studio.” In my mind, Studios were all about conversation and relationships, a model that could not be translated into a graph. In response to my refusal to understand studios in another way, Morgan developed a graphic of her own, one that, because she was working from her discipline, I thought missed all of the important aspects I wanted to communicate.

Here was the reflexive moment: If I did not find a way to bridge the disciplinary discourses, my students and my disciplinary partners would try to make meaning using the resources they had. As a rhetorician, I had to accept my responsibility for figuring out how to communicate in a way that my audience would understand. If that meant the best means of persuasion was an illustration, I should think through the possibilities of how to illustrate the process. If I am aware of the disciplinary differences, then I have to come to the conclusion that they are as uncomfortable with my words as I am sifting through all their charts and graphs. My encounter with Morgan made my responsibility for bridging discourses visible. I created a PowerPoint to visually represent the studio process, and in the end, that visual representation bridged our discourses in ways that I could not by simply using my disciplinary vocabulary.

Reflecting on what I have learned about bridging discourses, I asked Morgan about her experience in trying to communicate her discipline to me. She immediately acknowledged that she, too, felt the discomfort of collaborating with someone who speaks a different disciplinary language, describing the feeling as being “paralyzed:”

When I gave you something in a graph and you kept saying I don’t understand this, I was paralyzed. I didn’t know what else to do to try and help you understand it because . . . the form I put it in was perfectly understandable to me. And so I think that’s a challenge in communication—I mean it relates to writing, but communication in general—is when you think something is so clear the way you are saying it from your perspective, it is so hard to draw yourself out and put yourself in that other person’s shoes and then try to translate in a . . . different format that they would understand. (Personal communication, 1 March 2013)

Recognizing the “paralysis” within my ways of communicating may create open spaces to new ways of communicating. Because I had to bridge disciplinary

discourses, I had to learn to translate my ideas into other ways of thinking and speaking. This is not only good for my students; it is also good for my teaching.

REFLEXIVE MOMENT: DISCIPLINARY WAYS OF SPEAKING

I find that bridging disciplinary discourses is both one of the most rewarding and most challenging features in writing center and WID work. Those in writing center work know the discomfort of finding ourselves in a disciplinary conversation that is not our own. Of course, this discomfort, as Pemberton (1995) points out, can be a way for us to make productive the tension between writing center theory and the foundations of *Writing in the Disciplines*. Pemberton suggests that when we work with students in other disciplines, we have the opportunity to empower them in a way they cannot be in the classroom. When students come to the writing center, those of us working with them can allow them to claim authority over their subject matter while giving them the security of someone who “knows writing” to help guide the writing process (Pemberton, 1995, p. 123-125). The Studio approach provides a similar rebalancing of power. As Grego and Thompson (2008) note, “in a thirdspace like Studio groups, the usual scripted responses on which teachers base their authority, as well as students counterscripting moves, don’t quite fit, because in this space teacher-student power relationships are not as rigidly determined by institutional scripts as in the typical classroom” (p. 75).

When we first developed Writing Studios for the WID partnerships, the facilitators and I were aware of the disciplinary differences and hoped to use that to empower the students to take ownership of their own work. To acknowledge the students’ expert knowledge within the discipline, the facilitators (including myself, the first semester) consciously reminded the students that we would be able to help them with their writing, but they would need to rely on one another for responses to the graphic representations of their tools and measures. Even with that acknowledgement, we immediately found our language was not always easily accessible to the students. In fact, sometimes it confused the situation.

The pilot year of the partnership, I facilitated a studio group for Morgan’s course. As I finished my first round of reading the students’ work, I wrote a general comment to all the studio members reminding them that I was not “versed in the tools” and would be relying on them to give feedback on the use of the diagrams and charts. In my mind, the graphic representations existed “apart” from the writing. I was naïve to think this. Another interaction makes this clear. One student, David, struggled with articulating the specific problem he was analyzing. He asked the studio members to make sure that the process he was analyzing came through. I commented on his text, making suggestions about his

description of the process he was writing about, but not pulling in the diagrams and flowcharts he had attached. David read my response and responded with “I am confused.” No wonder. Because of the online space, I can reflect back on my comments, which suggest to me now that I was reading his writing as somehow being separate from his content. But I gave him no suggestions as to how to join those two.

Thankfully, one of his studio group members was able to translate for me, to join the content with the form, and to understand David’s charts and graphs as essential to his communicating. In the same thread, Jason responded:

David—I think that I understand what Michelle is saying. Look back through your IAR’s [individual activity reports] starting with #1, and make sure that you focus on the process to resolve your problem. That process is what goes into the FMEA [the diagramming tool learned in class]. I believe you looked at the causes that can affect getting to your goal and not the process itself. . . . Hope this helps! –Jason

The studio space allowed Jason and David to work through my way of speaking about writing and to begin to contextualize my language into their discipline. And, in this particular moment, the studio space empowered the student writers with disciplinary authority so that they could begin to help one another rather than simply relying on the “writing expert” for help.

Another student, Alex, made this comment to David: “[E]ven though your classmates may know how to read the PDPC [a diagramming tool learned in class], without any arrows or lines, someone outside of the course may have difficulty understanding the diagram.” The studios provided the space for these students to begin to reflect on how their ideas communicated to audiences both within their discipline and without. Perhaps more importantly, the studios provided an environment for both me and the Writing Center staff to see our own ways of communicating with students through their eyes, Qualley’s reflexive stance. We were able to take what was made visible in the online environment and use it in our face-to-face work. For example, after a training meeting in which we used the online studio groups to look at the differences in our discourse communities, one tutor excitedly rushed into my office. She had just finished a face-to-face studio with an Art History group during which she realized she was having trouble “talking their talk.” So she used her own discourse, telling them how a poet would break down the assignment, and then asked them to translate that for her into their own disciplinary voice. By making visible her disciplinary discourse, she gave her students the necessary vocabulary to begin describing their own.

ENCOUNTERING RESISTANCE TO INNOVATION: MOVING ONLINE STUDIOS INTO FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

Through the Writing Center's studio partnerships in WID, those of us collaborating experienced reflective and reflexive moments. Those moments were not always comfortable. There were disruptions in all of our ways of thinking about writing. But through the disruptions, real work was accomplished. So when the success of the online WID hybrid/studio model with Morgan resulted in a hybrid first-year composition course using the online Studio model, I was ecstatic. Now not only was I getting to work with the Studio model, but I would be partnering with people in my own discipline, with those who know writing, who understand the importance of invention, of revision, of audience. As the partnership developed, however, I realized that negotiating the disruptions studios can bring would challenge me in brand new ways. Certainly the studios did provide a space where we could experience the generative, creative, dynamic, and disruptive forces Morgan and I experienced. But there were moments when I found myself at an impasse, looking in the disruptions for clarity, understanding, and growth, unable to act on the insights made visible through the studio work. In this partnership, I did not as often experience the collective banding together that Ritola, et al. (this volume) advocates for, nor the productive collaboration that Fraizer (this volume) describes.

CALCIFICATION: PROCESS BECOMES PRODUCT

The first disruption dealt with the separation of spaces necessary for studio work. Because our first rendition of the online studios linked directly into the Blackboard class shell, I technically could not keep the instructors out of the studio space. The course shell belonged to the instructors, and by software design, instructors have access to all groups. So, from the beginning of the first-year composition Studio, knowing the importance of keeping a process space separate for the students, those of us in the Writing Center and in the English Department emphasized keeping the studio space exclusively for the students, one in which they did not have the authority figure of the instructor lurking over them while they worked through the messiness of their writing process.

But the need to know what was happening in the studio was incredibly hard to resist for most of the instructors. In addition, unlike the WID class, instructors attached a high percentage value to the students' participation in Studios, some as high as thirty percent of the grade. We took "attendance," a task that quickly became troublesome for some of the facilitators as the instructors gave them detailed instructions about when a student should get full credit and when they should

not. Some instructors wanted a breakdown of how many words each student posted, the quality of the response, and how developed each draft was. The facilitators would complain to me about the feeling that instructors were like helicopter moms: stalking the studios online, wanting information about students, specifically if they had attended on time. As I began thinking about why I was having these particular problems with this particular course and not with Morgan's, I began to realize that Studio, a place for process, was quickly becoming another graded task for the students. Our process was becoming our product.

Theoretically, those of us in composition espouse the importance of allowing for different processes in writing and for the recursive nature of writing. Focusing on process, after all, is one way we resist what we see as calcified thinking about writing. But because we have studied process and know it, we also want to teach it and control it. This need to control can actually backfire so that we make "process" the actual "product," thus a little bit negating the "process." I see this in myself. When I first started working with studios online, I insisted on a "prompt" to get the conversation going. By "prompting" conversation, many times I created a checklist of items for students to produce in this space that should be open to their individual processes. My prompt was a desire to force them into a process space. My facilitators soon pointed out to me the prompt was limiting their ability to facilitate what the students brought to the Studio.

The answer, of course, is not simply to "let go" of things like prompts and attendance points. We do, in fact, need structures in place in order for organic learning to occur. But the balance between structure and fluidity is a tenuous one, one I am constantly trying to keep from tipping. Both Morgan and the facilitators seemed to accept this need for balance. The resistance to allowing space for the fluid nature of Studios came specifically from instructors teaching first-year composition. Every semester, we revisited the conversation about what protocols needed to be put in place to make sure students who were not "participating" did not get credit. I argued that the students' papers should be the product measured. The instructors wanted assurance that the studio space would include required assessments. The tension to control was great, and the desire to, as one instructor said, "crack the whip" was ever-present.

In the first-year composition project, my ideal of student engagement and allowing the writing process to develop was disrupted when the Studio illuminated how my discipline uses that process to control. Xin Liu Gale (1996) astutely notes that "compositionists are simultaneously abandoning authority and re-claiming authority," and that this "paradoxical phenomenon . . . indicates the irresolvable conflict between the progressive teachers' desire to democratize teaching for social justice and equality and the violent dimension of teaching, which . . . demands the teacher's authority to ensure students' obedience and

participation” (p. 33-34). In the first-year composition hybrid/studio project, those of us in the teaching spaces collided with the irresolvable conflict that Gale describes. Because the Studio model is a collaborative environment, the teacher’s authority has to be reconceptualized. The online writing studio environment made the tension of teacher identity and authority, particularly for those teaching within our discipline, visible.

RISK AND RESISTANCE: RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE INSTITUTION

The impasse I just described likely occurred because in this partnership, we were all working within the same discipline. The spaces were not as easily separated as in WID projects, where we all clearly come with our own authoritative identity. Reflexive moments were harder to identify because what was reflected back was my own discipline’s ways of thinking. But I believe that the relationship with and status of the instructors within the institution explains the fossilization in the project even more than disciplinary identity does. The first-year composition project was built on the foundation of contingent labor, labor rife with tensions that both support and often hide the collisions between the reality and ideology of composition work. The effects of labor became particularly clear when I compared this partnership to the one with Morgan.

I initially understood the impasses in composition with Barbara Shapiro’s (2009) astute observations of composition’s disciplinary identity being intertwined with our teaching, and therefore with our relationship with students. I believe this intertwining would explain why Morgan would not feel the same need to know specifically what was occurring in the studio space. When I asked her about it, though, I discovered that while disciplinary identity did have something to do with her ability to create an instructor-free zone, the way she viewed her relationship with the students was very much shaped by her identity within and relationship with the institution.

Morgan first referenced an email I sent her that included a paragraph from an essay I had written in a rhetoric class. In the essay, I discussed Elio Frattaroli (2001), a Freudian psychoanalyst, who relates that physicians often have a tendency to become irritated and intolerant of patients who do not cure easily. He notes that Freud called this tendency “*furor sanandi*—‘the rage to cure’” (2001, p. 121). Frattaroli explains that this need to cure his patients may come from a need to prove his own worth rather than a concern for his patients. The rage is not necessarily a bad thing; in fact

[i]t is both an essential ingredient and a universal problem in the motivation of all who are drawn to the helping professions, and one of the primary reasons why all psychotherapists and

psychiatrists need psycho-therapy for themselves. Until they learn to recognize and come to terms with this rage to cure, therapists generally have trouble distinguishing their own needs from their patients' needs. (Frattaroli, 2001, p. 121)

I have used this passage to calm many facilitators who become frustrated at their students' seeming lack of improvement. "The rage to cure" has become a common phrase in our studio training. I do not remember why I shared it with Morgan; I believe it was after a conversation during which we had been bemoaning the slow pace of student development. She remembered it, though, and noted how the concept helped her reflect on her relationship to students and the effects of the tenure process on that relationship:

When you shared that that was like a big wake-up because I realized that all this pressure that I was under—here we go back to tenure—that I felt like I had to be perfect and if I was anything less than perfect I wouldn't get tenure . . . and I think that was translating into the classroom . . . my students' projects could not be anything less than perfect, and so I was like super hard on them. . . . [It is] not that I didn't care about their learning, because I thought that through this process [of writing] they would learn, but I think it backfired because it was too, too much. (Personal communication, 1 March 2013)

Morgan understood how her identity as a pre-tenured faculty member shaped her teaching. Her comment that students were the "means" by which she would get tenure mirrors Rhoades and Slaughter's (1998) observation about the changing relationship between universities and students: "Students are neither 'customers' or 'consumers.' They are the 'industry's' 'inputs' and 'products.' The purchasers of the products—private, corporate 'employers'—are the customers. The push, then, is to improve (standardize) the product by 'improving' the input" (p. 39). But the tenure relationship with the institution also gave Morgan the security of time necessary to take risks. Because of that security, and because the studios provided an opportunity for research (and thus for publishing), she was willing to confront the reflexive moments and adapt her teaching. She was willing to risk innovation because she could channel the knowledge about teaching into research and a publication toward tenure.

The instructors in the first-year composition partnership were all contingent faculty, on year-to-year contracts without the security of time. Rather than understanding the course as one in which they could reflect and make changes, the instructors felt the pressure to please administration, to have high grades

and high participation. They were not rewarded for new ways of thinking that resulted in research. Unlike Morgan, who, as a tenure-track faculty member, felt secure in knowing that she would be teaching each year, and who was motivated to research and explore new methods because of the pressures of tenure, these instructors taught each year not knowing if funding would be available in the next. They were the “disposable teacher[s]” Bousquet, Scott, and Parascondola (2004) describe. One instructor described the experience as surreal:

If I want this job, it has to succeed. It has to succeed on multiple levels. The surreal nature is not lost on me that I am the most contingent of contingent faculty. One whip and I'm gone. (Personal communication, 6 March 2013)

Fraizer (this volume) notes that “[s]tudio faculty members can ‘see’ and ‘be seen’ by others as we work together to understand each other’s goals and meet student needs.” Through my experience working with adjunct instructors in the studio partnership, I wonder if the increased visibility of studios can be too risky for those who do not have the security of tenure in today’s corporate university. I also wonder, and do not have an answer to, how this visibility might have been more risky because it was occurring outside of the home department of these home instructors.

What is interesting is that, despite this instructor’s fear, because of the popularity with administration to offer hybrid first-year composition courses, the number of sections continues to grow. With the growth, the Studio model has become the monument. The need for innovation is constant in order for our educational environments to thrive. Online studios provided one means for innovation, but we cannot imagine that they are the only one.

CONCLUSION

In moments of disruption, we have opportunity for innovation that can lead to new ways of understanding. Grego and Thompson developed Writing Studio out of a crisis moment. The development of online writing studios at the University of Houston was not so clearly a crisis moment, but there was a sense of needing something new. The online writing studio partnerships hosted in the Writing Center allowed both me and my partners to resist calcified pedagogies. In addition, the Studios provided institutional-, disciplinary-, and self-awareness by making visible institutional relationships and providing reflexive moments that broadened self-understanding. In fact, one of the greatest strengths of the online writing studio model was that by working with one another across disciplines and across programs, we could provide more spaces for innovation.

But, as countermonuments can do, the studio partnerships also revealed that sometimes structural risks are frankly too risky, particularly for contingent faculty. The corporate monument looms large and casts a long shadow. Resisting it may lead to self-destruction. Our work requires us to live in the spaces of tension. Butler is correct. Being willing to take those risks of instability, being willing to find reflexive moments and to question our very reason for being, is necessary for us to continue to remain vital. Finding and creating innovative practices, practices like the Studio method, allows the fluid nature of creativity and learning to occur even within the fossilized environments of the institution. Online writing studios are indeed an innovative method for teaching, but the true lesson of online writing studios has been this: The danger of calcification and the necessity of innovation means that we have to conclude with a commitment to being open to the countermonuments that help us to see both the possibilities and limitations within our work.

I am now at an institution where I serve as the Director of the Writing Center. I find that the insights gained from my writing studio partnerships affect not just my development of new studio partnerships but also my overall understanding of writing center work. Although I cannot ignore the pressures of the institution to develop writing center partnerships to “serve” more and more students, I can be aware of the dangers of “outsourcing,” and I can look for partnerships like mine with Morgan that allow for reflexive moments both for me and for my tutors. Working in a non-traditional learning space with peer tutors, with non-tenure track faculty members, and with students unsure of their academic status, I am aware of the risks I am asking of people who may not feel empowered to take those risks. But I am also aware of the necessity of reflective space, of reflexive space, and of constant innovation. And I am open to the possibilities innovative spaces like Writing Studios can provide. It is in these innovative spaces where we can resist the erosion at work within the academy.

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